

# Journal of the Sydney Society for Scottish History



Volume 16 September 2016

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Published by

The Sydney Society for Scottish History  
4/415 Glebe Point Road, GLEBE NSW 2037

ISSN 1320-4246

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# QUEENSHIP AND THE CHALLENGE OF A WIDOWED QUEEN: MARGARET TUDOR REGENT OF SCOTLAND

1513–1514<sup>1</sup>

Lorna G. Barrow

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A QUEEN consort in the pre-modern period had to consider what her role would be if she were widowed. The role of a widowed queen was complicated and its difficulty compounded if she had underage male heirs. In many places the assumption that she was entitled to be regent was set aside by the local nobles as it was in Sweden and Denmark. When James IV was killed on 9 September 1513 fighting against the English army of his wife's brother, Henry VIII, Margaret Tudor was left in a peculiarly invidious position. Margaret was pregnant, in a land hostile to her brother and not inclined to be ruled by a woman—and an Englishwoman at that.

James, in a will that does not survive, instructed that she should be regent during the minority of her young son, James V who in 1513 was aged just seventeen months.<sup>2</sup> This left a good deal unclear as there could be various types of regime under that heading. In Scotland the norm was for an individual to be aided by crown servants, nobles, religious and lesser men, but it was not always the case.<sup>3</sup> In the shocked aftermath of Flodden, however, the surviving nobles and

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to both Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia for a New Staff Grant (2014) that allowed me to travel to the United Kingdom to undertake archival research, and to The Institute of Scottish Historical Research at St Andrews University, Scotland, for a Visiting Scholarship in 2014–15. Much of the work in this paper was undertaken at this time.

<sup>2</sup> T. Thomson (ed.), *A Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents that Have Passed in Scotland Since the Death of James the Fourth till the Year M.D.LXXXV* (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1833), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Amy Blakeway, *Regency in Sixteenth-century Scotland* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), pp. 3–6.

ecclesiastics assumed that she would be the focus of the minority government and she formally took up this significant position while clearly pregnant; a second son, Alexander born posthumously on 30 April 1514, was then given into her care.

### *The Background*

Margaret Tudor, born on 28 November 1489 had been betrothed at thirteen to the Scottish King, James IV. The first Anglo-Scottish alliance in centuries, the Treaty of Perpetual Peace was signed along with marriage documents the day before their proxy marriage took place.<sup>4</sup> The marriage was celebrated at Westminster on 25 January 1502, with Patrick Hepburn, First Earl of Bothwell, proxy for James IV. Eighteen months later on 27 June Margaret made her progress to Scotland and solemnized the marriage with James IV on 8 August at Holyrood Abbey.<sup>5</sup> As she reached adulthood Margaret had started to fill the expected queenly role of intercessor and intermediary, but she was unable to prevent relationships between Scotland and England deteriorating once her brother had come to the English throne even though the English treaty had been confirmed by Henry VIII on 29 June 1509, following his father, Henry VII's death.<sup>6</sup> James's European sympathies lay with France while Henry's were with his Spanish

<sup>4</sup> British National Archives (BNA), SP 58/127, fols 111r–115v; National Archives Scotland (NAS), SP6/31; T. Rymer (ed.), *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica* (London: A. J. Churchill, 1816–69), vol. XIII, pp. 30–1.

<sup>5</sup> John Younge, Somerset Herald documented the proxy marriage as well as Margaret's procession to, and formal marriage in Edinburgh. College of Arms London (CAL), M1Bis, fols 84–95; CAL M13Bis, fols 76–115; BNA, SP58/1/27, fols 122r–142v; Lorna G. Barrow, 'The Kynge sent to the Qwene, by a Gentyelman, a grett tame hart': Marriage, Gift Exchange, and Politics: Margaret Tudor and James IV 1502–13', *Parergon*, 21, no. 1 (January 2004), pp. 65–84.

<sup>6</sup> R. L. Mackie (ed.), *The Letters of James IV 1505–1513* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1953), pp. 148–9

wife's family. Relations deteriorated. By 1511 James was writing to Pope Julius II stating that:

Henry VIII, sworn to his father's treaty, attacks the Scots by land and sea, Slaying, capturing and imprisoning.... James presumes that his holiness has freed them both (James IV and Henry VIII) from the incidence of the oath and sanction.<sup>7</sup>

James affected to regard this as fair inference that the treaty was to be dissolved by the agreements of both realms. Nevertheless, James IV wrote to the various parties in the league, and Margaret even wrote to Ferdinand as her affinity to Catherine of Aragon (his daughter), entitled her to this act of queenship. Margaret had received Leonard Lopez, Ferdinand's ambassador, on matters that were referred to her by her brother Henry VIII who sought her assistance for a meeting between James and Lopez. Margaret heard Lopez out and reported to James, who stated that his 'cherished wish is peace between Christian princes, and [he] continues to urge agreement upon his holiness and Louis, inviting Henry VIII to follow suit'.<sup>8</sup> James wrote to Ferdinand the same day and stated that Lopez is 'to announce that his queen [Margaret] urges James night and day to support the Pope and maintain his friendship with both kings'.<sup>9</sup> Scottish assemblies were called to discuss all this in 1511–2.

The attack by sea may have been the real source of James's anger. In 1509 Andrew Barton with king James IV's blessing had attacked the Dutch ships infesting the coasts of Scotland and sent the king (tradition has it) several barrels full of the heads of their captains.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Mackie, *Letters James IV*, pp. 218–219; J. S. Brewer (ed.), 'Henry VIII: December 1511', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII* (hereafter, *L&P H VIII*), volume 1, 1509–1514 (London, 1920), pp. 493–502, no. 947. British History Online: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.493-502>, accessed 23 August 2016.

<sup>8</sup> NAS, SP1/168, fol. 78; Mackie, *Letters James IV*, p. 238.

<sup>9</sup> Mackie, *Letters James IV*, p. 239.

<sup>10</sup> Mackie, *Letters of James IV*, pp. 129–31; John Lesley, *The History of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1830), p. 82. Note that a letter of reprisal had been

He was at the time an admiral of Scotland and in charge of the Scottish fleet. Intermittently, he went on as a privateer, which meant he could take goods for reprisal even from ships of nations not involved but not the ships themselves.<sup>11</sup> Two years later he was killed in a battle with an English fleet under Edward Howard who were acting, George Buchanan asserts, on Henry VIII's instructions. The Scottish ships were impounded by the English at Blackwall on 2 August 1511.<sup>12</sup> James IV, furious, sent Rothesay herald to London, to complain of this a breach of the 'Treaty of Perpetual Peace', and demand redress. Henry VIII, the chronicles tell us, claimed that Barton was a pirate, and that the fate of pirates ought never to be a subject of contention between princes.<sup>13</sup> To James, however, Barton was no pirate and in the lead up to the battle of Flodden the unjust slaughter of Andrew Barton, and the capture of his ships, were among the principal grievances for which James demanded redress.

The so-called Holy League had been formed by the Papal States, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire against France in October 1511 and England joined in November, Henry summoning parliament on 28 November having promised to make war before the end of the following April. The summons was to counter not only 'the high and insatiable appetite' of the French King but also 'the sybtle, untrue and crafty ymaginacion' of James IV.<sup>14</sup> When it met on 4 February

granted in 1476 as a consequence of the Bartons being plundered by the Portuguese. The Bartons more than recouped their losses and the Portuguese responded by attacking them again. This time they captured and imprisoned John Barton, father of Andrew. A letter of marque upon the Portuguese was reissued by James IV to Andrew Barton in 1507.

<sup>11</sup> N. Macdougall, *James IV* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989), pp. 242–3.

<sup>12</sup> A. Spont (ed.), *Letters and Papers Relating to the War with France 1512–1513* (London: Navy Records Society, 1897), pp. viii–ix.

<sup>13</sup> William Drummond, *The History of Scotland From the Year 1423 Until the Year 1542* (London: Henry Hills for Richard Tomlins, 1655), p. 139.

<sup>14</sup> J. S. Roskell, *The Commons and Their Speakers in English Parliaments, 1376–1523* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), p. 312



1512 it apparently took up the idea that Scotland was a dependency of England.

It is not therefore surprising that although Margaret Tudor laboured tirelessly to persuade James to accept a peaceful resolution she met with no success. Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie, writing two generations later, suggested that this was because of an action by Anne duchess of Brittany and queen of France who appealed to James IV's chivalric nature by 'styling him her knight'. Furthermore, she sent him not only a ring from her own finger, but a gift of 14,000 French crowns to help defray the cost of taking up arms in the French cause.<sup>15</sup> This has been repeated in many subsequent narratives but must be treated with caution. None of the lives of Anne of Brittany make any mention of this and they do say that she as duchess of Brittany was primarily anxious that the duchy be revived as an independent state after her death. She was not always promoting French interests—indeed rarely did unless it suited her own agenda.<sup>16</sup>

James and Margaret's attempts at peace brokering had failed and in March 1512 James renewed the Auld Alliance.<sup>17</sup> In a bid to draw England away from war in France, he declared war with England and the die was cast.<sup>18</sup> Margaret pleaded with James stating that one son in the succession was 'but a weak warrant to the realm of Scotland' and that 'if he passed to England, at that time, he would

<sup>15</sup> R. Lindesay of Pitscottie, *The History of Scotland from 21 February 1436 to March 1665* (Edinburgh: Freebairn, 1728), p. 110; Mary Anne Everett-Green, *Princesses of England*, vol. IV (London: Colburn & Co, 1852), p. 161.

<sup>16</sup> See for instance Cynthia Jane Brown, *The Cultural and Political Legacy of Anne de Bretagne Negotiating Convention in Books and Documents* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Everett-Green, *Princesses of England*, vol. IV, p. 150; Mackie, *Letters of James IV*, pp. liii–liv, nos. 445, 450.

<sup>18</sup> Audrey-Beth Filch, 'Maternal Mediators: Sainly Ideals and Secular Realities in Late Medieval Scotland', *The Innes Review*, vol. 57, no. 1 (Spring 2006), p. 20.

get battle'.<sup>19</sup> Margaret's prime concern was to ensure that the throne was secure, not just because she and James had lost several children, but also because it was preferable for the heir to be of age, and mature enough to take the on the running of the kingdom in their own right.

Pitscottie states that Margaret was a prudent woman who tried to stop James going to battle with her brother:

yet this noblewoman, did her duty and labour, so far as she might, for the good of her husband, and the commonweal of the country, and also for the love she bore her brother, the King of England, desiring no discord between the two Realms in her time.<sup>20</sup>

Margaret, was assuming the given queen's role of peace maker, but her efforts to stop James were fruitless.

He ignored Margaret's pleas to stop the impending war and remain at home arguing that he was forced by her brother's disrespect for the protocols attached to the 'Treaty of Perpetual Peace' to act in the best interests of his realm, and to protect his people and lands. At the beginning of 1513 Pope Julius II (through Bainbridge the English representative at the Holy See) excommunicated James because he had renewed the Auld Alliance.<sup>21</sup> Undeterred, James called his troops to war against England and sent his two most powerful ships to help Louis. While Henry was leading his army in France, James attacked over the border and the disaster at Flodden on 9 September 1513 was the result.

### *Margaret between 1513 and 1514*

The surviving ruling people in Scotland initially agreed to install Margaret as regent. The Lords of the Council met with Margaret at

<sup>19</sup> Lindesay, *History of Scotland*, p. 112.

<sup>20</sup> Lindesay, *History of Scotland*, p. 112.

<sup>21</sup> William E. Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors Before the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 43.

Stirling where she had gone with the young king, James V, on September 21. The death of his father had been accepted and the infant James (seventeen months old) was crowned that same day in the castle kirk.<sup>22</sup> Margaret's task as Regent was an onerous one. Not only was she widowed and pregnant, but she also had the care of the young James V, and the responsibility of rebuilding a realm that had been devastated in every way by a war that had been won by her brother. The Queen and the Lords made provision for her to have constant council on a daily basis with at least three to four lords (both spiritual and temporal), present at all times, rotating on a forty day cycle.<sup>23</sup> These men included: James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow, chancellor; William Elphinstone, bishop of Aberdeen; James Douglas, earl of Morton; Alexander Lindsay, earl of Crawford; and John lord Drummond.<sup>24</sup>

Dissension between the different members of her council, however, was evident from the start. Friar Boneventure Langley, Provincial of the Friars Observant, had been sent by Katherine of Aragon (acting as Regent of England in Henry VIII's absence in France), to comfort her sister-in-law, Margaret, immediately after the debacle and to discuss a peace treaty. While raids and skirmishes undertaken on the Borders by Thomas, Lord Dacre, warden of the West March, following Henry VIII's orders, continued there was likely to be suspicion and distrust of Langley and his role as a peace broker for England.<sup>25</sup> As Maria Perry states, 'there was no question of disloyalty to the Queen and the divisions were not yet deep enough to be labelled as faction, but several lords felt they could scarcely trust

<sup>22</sup> Robert Kerr Hannay (ed.), *Acts of the Lords of Council in Public Affairs 1501-1554* (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1932), p. 1

<sup>23</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 4; for a full list of the General Council see p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *L&P H VIII*, vol. 1, no. 2386: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.1078-1084>, accessed 16 August 2016; no. 2243: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.1078-1084>, accessed 16 August 2016.

the mediations of Friar Langley while Lord Dacre continued to terrorize the Borders'.<sup>26</sup>

The initial doubt as to whether James had been killed<sup>27</sup> was exploited by various people concerned.<sup>28</sup> Louis XII used it probably as a pretext to hang onto the ships James had sent, and it was a good excuse for Arran and Fleming who were at Louis's court, to press for John Stuart, duke of Albany, to go to Scotland. This was because Albany was a good military leader and there were fears that once he returned Henry would attack Scotland. Some of her council had also asked Louis to send Albany along with the ships that James IV had sent to France to help against the English.<sup>29</sup> Albany, who was the leader of the Scots guards who protected the French King, was also James IV's cousin and the next heir to the throne after James V.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Perry, *Sisters of the King, The Tumultuous Lives of Henry VIII's Sisters—Margaret of Scotland and Mary of France* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1998), pp. 70–72.

<sup>27</sup> Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of Scotland and English Princesses* (Edinburgh and Scotland: William Blackwood, 1850), vol. 1, pp. 97–98; George Buchanan, *History of Scotland, Translated from the Latin of George Buchanan, a New Edition* (Edinburgh: Michael Anderson, 1821), vol. 2, pp. 366–368.

<sup>28</sup> At first there was confusion over whether the body thought to be his might have been that of Andrew Lord Elphinstone whose physical attributes were similar to the king's. Others thought that the king had fled to Jerusalem on expiatory pilgrimage, still more incredible though, was the story at the end of the sixteenth century that he had been abducted by the Elfin queen and was now residing in Fairyland. This was based on the testimony of a witch finder by the name of Andrew Man, who confessed that he had seen him there. Man was later burned at the stake as a witch. The body that was later claimed as that of James IV was penetrated by a spear, but a cannonball had obliterated all the features that might identify the king. Moreover, this body thought to be James was claimed by the English and taken to England, where it remained embalmed, but was thought not to have been buried for another 25 years. Stuart McCabe has put much of this into his new book, *Queen Margaret Tudor: The Story of a Courageous but Forgotten Monarch* (Cirencester: Mereo, 2016) including the apocryphal burial details from Agnes Strickland.

<sup>29</sup> *Records of the Acts of Parliament of Scotland* James V, 26 November 1513, <https://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/A1515/7/2>, accessed 1 August 2016.

Louis replied on October 4, 1513 that he needed to find out for certain if James IV was still alive, and for this purpose he sent his ambassador, Antoine D'Acres de la Bastie (the white knight) along with Master James Ogilvy, to Scotland. They were to find out what state the country of Scotland was in and what the will of Margaret and the estates and council were so that they might offer the best service. Louis was not prepared to send Albany at this time, who was a celebrated military commander, or to send back the ships as he was still at war with Henry VIII, meanwhile he was content to maintain the alliance that he had made with James IV the year before James's death.<sup>30</sup> The parliament that met at Perth on November 26, in the presence of Bastie and Ogilvy, granted the continuance of the alliance with France.

There has, in fact, been much debate about Henry VIII's intentions towards Scotland after James IV's death. Was he concerned for Margaret, as Pitscottie suggested a generation later or was he systematically undermining her? Pitscottie wrote that:

Henry ... hearing of the king of Scotland his guid brotheris death, he was verrie heavily commoved thairat; and gave command to nus nobles and barones that non of them should invaid nor trouble Scotland the tyme of the kingis minority, under the paine of treason, and this he commandit straitlie, and sett forth lettres tairupoun, for love of his sister and his sister sone, thinkand that nothing sould faill on his syd of the band that was maid betuixt the king of Scotland and him notwithstanding the borderis of Scotland was ever doeing quhat they might to break the same.<sup>31</sup>

There was internal strife in the Scottish kingdom and Pitscottie states that the James Hamilton, Earl of Arran, who considered himself next in line to the infant king, insisted that he should have the care of

<sup>30</sup> *Records of the Acts of Parliament of Scotland* James V, 26 November 1513, <https://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/A1515/7/2>, accessed 1 August 2016; Denys Hay (ed.), *Letters James V* (Edinburgh: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954), pp. 1–2.

<sup>31</sup> J. G. Dalyell (ed.), Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, *The Chronicles of Scotland* (Edinburgh: George Ramsay, 1814), vol. 2, pp. 283–4.

James in his minority. This was unacceptable to the other lords who were reluctant to give him so much power. They were happy at this point to support Margaret as regent so long as she remained a widow, and kept her 'bodie cleane from licherie'.<sup>32</sup>

Henry VIII also had hopes of managing Scotland through his sister. Around 30 September 1513, Henry, who was in France, sent instructions to Margaret via lord Dacre, that showed that Henry had every intention of ruling Scotland through her. Furthermore, Henry, because he was James' uncle, also saw himself as guardian to the young king, and even considered bringing James V to England for 'safe keeping'; after all, James V was at that stage second in line to the English throne after Margaret (Henry had no surviving children until Mary was born in 1516). Henry's orders to Dacre were:

King's grace, or at least wise the Queen of Scots, being ordered by the King's highness, may the rather cause the said young King to be also ordered and ruled by the King's grace, and his grace to set such protectors and rulers as he shall think good. The 'said Lord Dacres' shall endeavour what he can to have the young King of Scots placed in the hands of the King of England, who is his natural guardian. In the above Dacres shall be careful to give the Scots no reason to remove the young King into any out isles or other parts, where he shall be in further danger and more difficult for the King to attain. Is to inform the Lord Chamberlain that the Queen of England, for the love she bears to the Queen of Scots, would gladly send a servant to comfort her. Is to advertise the Queen of all occurrents.<sup>33</sup>

One major problem was that technically because James had been excommunicated his realm fell under the same interdict and this needed to be raised. Certainly Henry VIII had written to Leo X as early as November 1513 seeking permission to have James IV buried at St Paul's, and 'as it is to be presumed the King gave some signs of repentance in his extremities', the Pope allowed for James to be buried with full funereal honours by a prelate of the realm of

<sup>32</sup> Lindsay, *The Chronicles of Scotland*, p. 284.

<sup>33</sup> *L&P H VIII*, vol. 1, no. 2323: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.1023-1042>, accessed 1 September 2016.

England.<sup>34</sup> This would be seen as an act of goodwill towards his sister Margaret, and the council of James V, and would aid his own agenda for the realm of Scotland at the same time. Whether the burial was ever carried out is still the subject of historical debate. There were many more immediate problems however.

### *The Problems of the Early Minority*

By 29 September, all the ammunition and weapons that had been sent earlier by the French King, to help James IV in battle with the English, were brought to Stirling, first by water from Dumbarton to Glasgow, where they were then carried overland by the lords of Glasgow, Paisley and Newbottle. The munitions were to remain there with Margaret and the lords, not only for the defence of the king, but also about keeping the weapons in a safe place.<sup>35</sup> There was much uncertainty as to whether the English would resume the fight, and more importantly, there was a great desire among the young lords to avenge the deaths of both James IV, and their relatives. This would have spelled disaster for the Scottish Kingdom as there were so few men left to build an army and many of the garrisons lay destroyed and depleted of arms. Scotland was in a state of crisis. The situation remained confused; Dacre's letters to Henry suggest that the council was already split between the young inheritors and the older members.<sup>36</sup>

Some 10,000 Scotsmen are thought to have perished at Flodden along with the king. Among the fallen were many mature statesmen who might have been able to help Margaret as Regent, to govern the

<sup>34</sup> *L&P H VIII*, vol. 1, no. 2469, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.1084-1102>, accessed 4 August 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> *L&P H VIII*, vol. 1, no. 2443: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.1078-1084>, accessed 1 September 2016; no. 2913: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.1256-1266>, accessed 1 September 2016.

realm more easily.<sup>37</sup> The kingdom was in a state of disorder from a legal perspective. The *Acts of the Lords of the Council* state that ‘sickly crimes’ were being committed on the Flodden widows and their daughters. These included the rape of widows and the ‘deflowering’ of the maidens, along with other crimes against them. Others, such as Elizabeth Arnot, widow of Robert Colville of Uchiltre and her son James, had their home taken and were denied access to it by relatives.<sup>38</sup> Margaret and her council, shocked by the state of affairs, passed laws that made such crimes treasonable.<sup>39</sup>

Paramount to keeping the realm in order was filling the positions of the clergy who had been killed at Flodden. Amongst the dead were bishops, and they needed to be replaced. Sixteenth-century Scottish bishops had power over the bailies, therefore, the bishops controlled both the collection of taxes and had the right to apprehend criminals who in turn could be turned over to the sheriffs. Allocating competent men to these posts was an essential means of maintaining law and order.<sup>40</sup> Henry VIII was already attempting to exercise control writing to Leo X that the archbishopric of St Andrews was recent and that the bishops had been suffragans of York, a position that should be restored and also asking that no vacant Scottish bishopric should be filled before he had himself expressed his wishes with regard to them.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> For a full list of these men see: *L&P H VIII*, vol. 1, no. 2313: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.1023-1042>, accessed 1 September 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>40</sup> Perry, *Sisters of the King*, p. 72.

<sup>41</sup> *L&P H VIII*, vol. 1, no. 2355: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp.1046-1055>, accessed 1 September 2016; John Herkless and Robert Kerr Hannay, *The Archbishops of St Andrews*, vol. II (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909), p. 3. Note: this volume is entirely devoted to Andrew Forman.



Scottish kings had the ordinary royal prerogative of nominating to vacant prelacies, and therefore, Margaret wrote to Pope Leo X to suggest candidates.<sup>42</sup> Because she had not sought their council it caused issues with the nobles who saw it as an abuse of her power as Regent. The most important post was that of the Archbishop of St. Andrews that had belonged to James IV's illegitimate son Alexander Stewart, who had died beside his father at Flodden.<sup>43</sup> Traditionally the Archbishop of St Andrews became the guardian of the king in his minority, and therefore the position needed to be filled by someone that could be trusted by all.<sup>44</sup> Margaret originally chose William Elphinstone, the Bishop of Aberdeen, who was near eighty. Elphinstone had a sound reputation and was acceptable to all parties.<sup>45</sup> Elphinstone rejected the post as he was old and sick. This left the position open and the Pope saw an opportunity to put in his own candidate, his nephew Cardinal Cibo, who was not a native of Scotland which he did on 13 October.<sup>46</sup> Margaret wrote to Cardinal Cibo stating that:

... since the Scottish kings take oath to protect privileges, and both nobles and people take up arms to defend them, the realm positively declines to be without the primate who stands next to the king and is the guardian of his youth. The cardinal should therefore support the royal nominations ...<sup>47</sup>

There were then three competitors: the prior of St Andrews, John Hepburn who was elected by the canons; Gavin Douglas who was Margaret's preference, and Andrew Forman, a Scottish diplomat, bishop of Moray (and on June 7 1513 appointed Archbishop of Bourges), who had done stalwart services to the Stewarts and to the

<sup>42</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, 'Introduction', p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>45</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>46</sup> Elphinstone died on 25 October 1514.

<sup>47</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, p. 13.

Douglasses, including arranging the marriage of Margaret and James and the treaty with England. Forman, who had frequently been at the Court of Rome, was chosen by the pope. Leo considered that Forman would be 'loyal to Margaret and the council as he was to James IV, and no one could be better qualified to serve the realm at home and in the Roman court'.<sup>48</sup> James had indeed sent Forman to Rome to promote peace, and, as a well-known peace broker, he had attributes that Scotland needed desperately at this time.

Margaret on behalf of James V, along with some members of her council, objected to Forman's appointment on the grounds of having made another choice, that of Gavin Douglas, within the period of privilege, and stated that 'no other appointment [would] be suffered'.<sup>49</sup> The proposal of Douglas by Margaret and her group caused an outcry from the rest of the council who rejected having a Douglas with so much power, and the pope's appointment of Forman prevailed. Forman was appointed on 8 December 1514, but it was not for another fourteen months that he was admitted as archbishop of St Andrews around 4 February 1516.<sup>50</sup>

While the young noble heirs accepted Margaret as Regent there was an undercurrent of discontent at having not only an English-born queen, but one who was also the sister of their enemy, Henry VIII. Thomas Spinelly, an English agent in the Netherlands reported in a letter written on 15 November 1513, that from 'the news brought to Zeland by the two ships from Scotland, it appears the Lords there are not pleased that the Queen should have the rule, as they fear she will comply too much with England'.<sup>51</sup> This highlights the very precarious position that Margaret found herself in. She had a difficult balancing act to perform in both domestic and foreign policy. She needed to keep the Scottish nobles on side, while making peace with

<sup>48</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, p. 16.

<sup>49</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, p. 28. *L&P H VIII*, no. 2445: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=102703>, pp. 11–20, accessed 30 March 2014.

England. She managed this in February 1514, but it was an uneasy peace.

Albany, like the young Scottish nobles, worried that Margaret might put England's interest above Scotland or France, also gave de la Bastie instructions when he went to Scotland: if the death of James IV was true, he was to express to Margaret and the Scottish Lords, his 'profound regret' and entreat Margaret to 'maintain her son's right and realm, and pursue her husband's deliberate policy in regard to the Auld Alliance', vital to both kingdoms.<sup>52</sup> The Scots, he stated, should persuade the queen to follow this as a matter of honour. Furthermore, 'the council and the estates are above all things to preserve unity, sinking personal interests and controversies; and the queen is to be reminded that the concern comes home to her mostly'.<sup>53</sup>

Margaret was in her eighth month of pregnancy when the parliament met in Edinburgh on 13 March 1514. The sight of the heavily pregnant and widowed queen riding through the streets of Edinburgh was a powerful image of queenship and provoked an enthusiastic reception from the Scottish people. Margaret thanked her council for their great diligence and labours for the common good of the realm.<sup>54</sup> She then retired to Stirling to await the birth to Alexander, leaving the council to run the realm in her absence. There is not much evidence related to the actual birth of Alexander. The Queen had suffered difficult postnatal times in the past, but the birth of Alexander on 30 April seems to have gone more smoothly and she was mentioned in the *sederunt* of the council in the *Acts of the Lords of the Council* by 11 May.<sup>55</sup>

According to Amy Blakeway, W. K. Emond asserts that there were foundations, based on Margaret's lack of involvement with

<sup>52</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Hay, *Letters James V*, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 15.

government, that she was a mere figurehead.<sup>56</sup> But as Blakeway states: ‘there is evidence that Margaret attempted to forge a politically influential role, and that her understanding of the relationship between regent and council created political conflict’.<sup>57</sup> While Margaret is recorded twice as having been present at council meetings, Blakeway demonstrates that Margaret was certainly present at other meetings such as that of 26 September 1513, when ‘Lord Maxwell was summoned before the council “at the quenis Instance”’.<sup>58</sup> This also suggests that she might well have been at other council meetings where she failed to be recorded as present.

Margaret’s authority was challenged during her confinement when she tried to exercise her will over spiritual and secular appointments. In a letter written by her on 26 March 1514, from Stirling Castle where she had retired to wait out the remainder of her pregnancy, she requested the suspension of Patrick Panyter as secretary.<sup>59</sup> This was challenged by James Hamilton, earl of Arran, at the council meeting held at the beginning of April, ‘on the dubious grounds that parliamentary approval was necessary to remove the secretary.’<sup>60</sup> The second knockback to her position came when Arran, the next day, moved ‘that all correspondence with Rome should be read to the council prior to despatch’, thus preventing Margaret from having the sole decision about appointments of clergy to benefices.<sup>61</sup> It seems likely that because Margaret was not at the council she was less able to influence the proceedings.

The support generated by her pregnancy was dissipating. As Thomas, Lord Dacre, warden of the West March, was still patrolling

<sup>56</sup> Blakeway, *Regency in Sixteenth-Century Scotland*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>57</sup> Blakeway, *Regency in Sixteenth-Century Scotland*, p. 72.

<sup>58</sup> Blakeway, *Regency in Sixteenth-Century Scotland*, p. 72.

<sup>59</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 15.

<sup>60</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 15; Blakeway, *Regency in Sixteenth-Century Scotland*, p. 72.

<sup>61</sup> Blakeway, *Regency in Sixteenth-Century Scotland*, p. 72.

the borders with a sizeable number of troops as Maria Perry asserts, ‘the lords of the council became suspicious and began to see Margaret as Henry’s sister, not the tragic widow of their lost leader.’<sup>62</sup> In the summer that followed, however, the nobles in spite of their reservations about her being the sister of the English King, were willing to sign a statement in support of her regency, which as Maria Perry states, was tantamount to ‘a promise not to divide into factions which had been the bane of Scottish history in the past’.<sup>63</sup> They signed an agreement on 12 July 1514 that reads:

we are content to stand in one mind and will, to concur with all the lords of the realm to the pleasure of our master the King’s grace, your grace and for the common weal and to use none other bands now or in time to come.<sup>64</sup>

But by the following month, around the 26 August, Margaret had received a request from the council to call John Stuart the Duke of Albany from France to act as Governor of Scotland.<sup>65</sup> The intention was to have a strong military leader to ‘oppose Lord Dacre on the Borders, and to restore law and order in Scotland.’<sup>66</sup> The council ordered Margaret to give up the great seal and make no more proclamations.<sup>67</sup>

What had brought this about? At the time of James IV’s death Margaret was also the heir to the throne of England. The first son of Henry VIII, her younger brother, and his wife, Catherine of Aragon, had died shortly after his birth and they had produced no surviving children at this time. It was entirely possible that Margaret or one of her children could become the next queen or king of England. She

<sup>62</sup> Perry, *Sisters of the King*, p. 75.

<sup>63</sup> Perry, *Sisters of the King*, p. 76; Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 18.

<sup>64</sup> Perry, *Sisters of the King*, p. 76; Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 18.

<sup>65</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 19.

<sup>66</sup> Perry, *Sisters of the King*, p. 72.

<sup>67</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 19

was therefore, in her widowed state, at the age of only twenty-four, and fertile, considered a most desirable bride by international political and dynastic players. These included the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, and Louis XII, who had been widowed of Anne of Brittany shortly after Flodden.<sup>68</sup>

Margaret however, widowed, regent and weakened by the birth of Alexander, was in an absolutely vulnerable state and played her political cards badly. The position of a female regent who remarried was uncertain. If it was paralleled to the position of an ordinary widow it could be argued that she had renounced her rights. Could Margaret maintain the Regency in James V's minority if she remarried? The argument against it was that a widowed queen was less likely to cause factions at court, especially if she had the custody of a king or queen in their minority.

The ambitious elder statesman John, lord Drummond, however, was intent on having his grandson, Archibald Douglas, sixth earl of Angus, made husband to the queen-dowager despite the well-known fact at the time that Angus was betrothed to Lady Jane Stewart of Traquair. The instigations and persuasion of his grandfather fuelled Angus's ego and ambition with promises of greater power and wealth by trying for the hand of queen. Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie wrote in the *History and Chronicles of Scotland* that Angus 'haunted the court and was very lusty in the sight of the Queen', who was much enamoured of him and 'thought him most able.'<sup>69</sup>

By 17 September 1514 those that had supported Margaret, the Bishops of Glasgow, Aberdeen and Galloway and the earls of Arran, Huntly and Home were considering whether she had the right to the tutrix of the young King. The following day they wrote to Albany

<sup>68</sup> Rawdon Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy* (CSPV) 1509–1519 (London: Public Record Office, 1867), vol. II, letters: 367, 369, 383, 398, 415, 436, 440.

<sup>69</sup> J. G. Mackay (ed.), Robert Lindsay, of Pitscottie, *History and Chronicles of Scotland 1473–1561*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1899–1911), vol. 2, p. 208; Perry, *Sisters to the King*, p. 76.

requesting that he and all the ships that had been sent to France, to help with the French war against the English, come back for the defence of the realm.<sup>70</sup> The reason for the volte-face by her nobles was because she and Angus had been married in a secret ceremony in August 1516. Perry expresses the canonical view that ‘in one moment of womanly weakness and romantic folly, Margaret Tudor had effectively destroyed her own powerbase.’<sup>71</sup>

While this move brought Scotland to the brink of civil war, her reasons may have been more hard-headed. She and her children were vulnerable in a country largely controlled by a fractious and factious nobility that had no love of her brother Henry VIII, her countrymen and no great affection for her. A marriage with one of Scotland’s greatest nobles was potentially a means of helping her to protect her sons. To marry outside of the realm would have meant leaving her two infant sons behind. It is likely that she knew of her mother’s brothers, Edward V and Richard, Duke of York, the princes in the tower, who disappeared in the hands of their uncle the future Richard III. This would have weighed heavily on her mind. Nevertheless her marriage to Angus rendered her, in the eyes of the Lords of the Council, unsuitable for the role of Regent. They decreed on 19 September 1514 at Dunfermline, that:

... the quenis graice has tynt the office of turtrix of the kingis grace our soverane lord hir sone, and sall ceis fra the using of the samyn in times cuming and sall nocht intromit with na materis pertening to the crown, and decernis the lordis of counsale provyde tharfor, becaus sche has contractit mariage and past *ad secundas nuptias* throw the quhilk the office of tutory cassis in hir conforme to the lawis of the realm.<sup>72</sup>

Margaret had, whether inadvertently or not, given up her rights to lead the kingdom in her son’s name. The repercussions of her marriage to Angus, gave her in the future, not only a good deal of

<sup>70</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, pp. 20–21; Perry, *Sisters of the King*, 76.

<sup>71</sup> Perry, *Sisters of the King*, p. 76.

<sup>72</sup> Hannay, *Lords of Council*, p. 22.

despair, but exacerbated the already factious and fractious nobles that made the minority of James V anything but peaceful.

From a queenship perspective, Margaret had, up to the point where she had remarried without consent of her council, acted as a noble and competent widow, mother and Regent. James IV had been secure enough in her abilities to trust her with the role in his will. Margaret had already demonstrated before his death that she was an able and trusted peacemaker having supported Scotland's needs before those of her father or brother. She followed this practice as Regent. She had an excellent understanding of the domestic, religious and international affairs of Scotland, and had for the first year as Regent, managed with some success to secure the allegiance of the majority of the nobles. Her marriage to Angus was, however, a mistake. Albany returned to Scotland in May 1515 as Regent and although she was still treated with consideration she could no longer control events.





